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PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

18-20 TRINITY STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1628

(860) 240-8300

FAX: (860) 240-8314

Email: pcsw@cga.ct.gov

www.cga.ct.gov/PCSW

Written Testimony of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee Tuesday, March 7, 2006

In support of SB 463, AAC Family and Medical Leave for State Employees for the Serious Illness of a Child

As you are aware, the PCSW has long supported family and medical leave proposals. Society and the labor force have changed so that balancing the needs of work and family is now a priority for most workers.

In the majority of American households, there is no “stay-at-home” adult to take care of family needs. Whether there is a single parent or two parents in the home, they are most often out of the home working. More than 1 in 3 families need at least 2 weeks each year to care for an ill family member; 1 in 4 families need at least 3 weeks each year.¹ And when employees choose to take time off from work to care for their sick children, they sometimes experience a negative response from their employers. As many as 24% of employed parents report that they face problems at work when they have to care for a sick child.²

¹ S. Jody Heymann, Harvard School of Public Health study, 1996

² National Partnership for Women & Families, *Family Leave for More Family Needs* fact sheet, available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org>.

RB 463 would extend family and medical leave to a state employee who needs time off to care for an adopted child, foster child, stepchild or a child of whom a person has legal guardianship. PCSW applauds the committee's commitment to protecting parents who need unpaid leave to care for the illness of a child under the parent's care, regardless of the circumstances that created the parent-child relationship, and for promoting the well-being of children. In the absence of a "stay at home" parent, many families face tough decisions with respect to the care of a sick child and RB 463 will lead to better parenting and help lessen the anxiety of these families by protecting a person's employment should they need to take time off from work.